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ABSTRACT

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF AUTHORITY STRUCTURES IN THREE TYPES OF SCHOOLS WERE STUDIED. TEACHERS AT MULTIUNIT SCHOOLS, INDIVIDUALLY PRESCRIBED INSTRUCTION (IPI) SCHOOLS, AND CONTROL SCHOOLS WERE QUESTIONED AS TO WHO MADE CERTAIN DECISIONS AND WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN A PARTICULAR DECISION. THIS REPORT DISCUSSES THE RESULTS FOUND AT THE VARIOUS TYPES OF SCHOOLS. IN THE CONTROL SCHOOLS, THE TEACHERS HAVE MORE AUTONOMY, BUT HAVE ACCESS TO CONSULTANTS FOR SPECIAL PROBLEMS. IN THE MULTIUNIT SCHOOLS, THE TEACHERS EXERCISE LESS INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY, BUT PARTICIPATE IN MAKING DECISIONS AT THE UNIT LEVEL. IN THE INDIVIDUALLY PRESCRIBED INSTRUCTION SCHOOLS, THE TEACHERS RELINQUISH SOME OF THEIR AUTHORITY IN ORDER TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS. (JY)

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THE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS

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This paper concerns the decision-making process of schools studied by the Attributes Projects. It is limited in scope in that it deals only with teacher perceptions of authority structures in the school. While there are many approaches to the study of decision-making, we have decided to limit ourselves to the study of the authority structure, although in future reports we plan to report on the decision-making process in much greater detail and along other dimensions. At present, we have limited our analysis to only 18 of the 50-odd schools included in our study. In the future, we plan to complete the analysis of the entire sample. At that time we will deal with perceptions of the authority structure held by teachers, principals, and other personnel.

In order to determine teacher perceptions of the authority structures in schools, we were concerned with these questions: (1) Which positions in the schools had the primary responsibility for making certain decisions, and what other positions were involved in each decision; and (2) what is the nature of the relationship of the people involved in a particular decision. To identify teacher perceptions of these matters, we asked two series of questions. First, we asked the teachers to indicate in five different decision-making areas the degree to which they or others were involved in making a decision. The five decision-making areas that we chose were all classroom related activities. They included choice of teaching methods, scope and sequence of subject matter content, choice of instructional materials other than textbooks, pupil promotion, and scheduling daily classroom activities. We then asked the teachers to indicate who had the responsibility for making decisions in each of these areas. In each case, the teacher would specify that the decision was made in one of the following ways: (1) The teacher has complete autonomy in making decisions; (2) several people have the job of making recommendations to the teacher (we call this consultive authority); (3) the teacher has the right to make some part of the decision within limits (we call this limited

autonomy); (4) the teacher, with several others, makes certain decisions (we call this participative authority); and (5) someone other than the teacher has the authority to make the decisions. Each teacher selected the most appropriate rating for each decision-making area. In addition, each teacher named the other people involved in making decisions where appropriate.

As with the other papers presented thus far in this symposium, the schools in our study sample consist of Multiunit Schools and their controls, Individually Prescribed Instruction Schools (IPI) and their controls, and six schools from one school district in the state of Washington. Before discussing the differences between the various types of schools--e.g., Multiunit as compared with IPI Schools--and the regional differences we found, we would like to discuss variability within types of schools. In order to do this, we will break the schools down into three basic types: (1) control schools, including all the control schools in Wisconsin and New Jersey-Pennsylvania as well as the six schools in the Washington school district; (2) the Multiunit School, consisting of three schools in the state of Wisconsin; and (3) the Individually Prescribed Instruction Schools, including three schools in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. First we will discuss the control schools.

The control schools present a very consistent pattern. The principal is seen as the primary authority figure in each school, but his relations with the teachers are primarily consultive rather than prescriptive. This means that in most control schools the principal is listed quite frequently as making suggestions or consulting with teachers about the five decision-making areas included in our questionnaire. It should be made clear, however, that the role of the principal is consulting; that is, the teachers were the primary decision-makers in the classroom. This supports the notion of the school as a number of individual classrooms, with the activity of those classrooms being directed primarily by the teacher.

It should also be noted that in two of the districts included in our study, central office personnel emerged as consultive authority figures. This does not seem to be a regional effect in that one school district in Wisconsin and one school district in New Jersey-Pennsylvania indicated that the central office personnel (primarily the supervisor of elementary education) emerged as consultive authority figures among the teachers. In addition, a reading consultant in one of the Wisconsin districts was named quite frequently by teachers as a consultive leader. The overall pattern, however, is not disturbed by the central office personnel, for in every case the principal was by far the one named most frequently as a consultant.

In summary, the control schools, including all control schools in Wisconsin, New Jersey-Pennsylvania, and the six schools in Washington, reported quite consistent patterns in authority structures with regard to the decision-making areas we studied. The teachers saw themselves as the real decision-makers, but reported that the principal aided in making decisions in a consultive sense. As we shall see next, the Multiunit Schools in Wisconsin do not show this pattern.

The Multiunit Schools do show <u>one</u> type of consistent pattern. Most decisions are made in committees, rather than by individual teachers. With regard to authority, this is the one distinguishing characteristic of the Multiunit School. Within this framework, however, the Multiunit system allows for quite distinctive types of schools. In the three Multiunit Schools that we studied, we found three different types of authority relations. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss each of these three types in turn.

One school is what we would consider to be prototypic, that is, it most closely resembles the prescriptive Multiunit School developed by the Wisconsin Research and Development Center. In this school, we found two major levels in the authority structure. The school relies a great deal on the Instruc-

tional Improvement Committee (the principal and the unit leaders) as a major decision-making body. In addition, the units themselves act as coordinative committees. The principal plays a dominant part in the decision-making process, but he shares a great deal of his authority with the unit leaders. In addition, the unit leaders do not act as "principals" in their units, but rather as "leaders," and most of the decisions are made in a cooperative manner by the unit leaders and the teachers. Within each unit, the teachers and the unit leader concern themselves primarily with day-to-day planning decisions in unit meetings. The Instructional Improvement Committee (principal and unit leaders) concerns itself primarily with the more long range goals of the school. This situation stands in contrast to those in the other two Multiunit Schools.

We could not find evidence in the other two Multiunit Schools that the teachers in them considered the Instructional Improvement Committee a major decision-making unit. In both of the schools, the units seem to stand alone as the major coordinative groups in the school. This is not to say, however, that there were not differences between the two schools. In one school, there was a great deal of consistency among the units. That is, it appears that the same type of decision-making process occurred in each of the three units. It is likely that there was some sort of informal system working in the schools that produced this consistency. We have not completed our analysis of the power structure of the schools, and, at this time, do not have the data to support this suspicion.

The last Multiunit School is quite similar to the second in structure. In other words, the principal and the Instructional Improvement Committee do not seem to be a major decision-making body within the school. There is one important difference, however, between these two Multiunit Schools. Each unit in the third Multiunit School appears to be a small school in and of it-

self. The decision-making processes differ in each of the units. For instance, one of the units may have a participative type of decision-making structure, while in another unit decisions may be made by the unit leader acting alone. The principal of this third school does not actively involve himself in the operation of the organization to the extent that the principal in the prototypic school does. This briefly describes the internal variability found among the Multiunit Schools.

In addition to internal variability, these three Multiunit Schools also differ quite considerably in their use of central office personnel as part of the decision-making process in the instructional systems of the school. The prototypic school makes great use of central office consultants, but primarily in a consultive role. The school in which each unit acts as a school within itself also makes great use of the central office staff, but here the relationship between consultants and teachers is largely prescriptive. Finally, the school where there is dominance by the unit committees shows little use of the central office consultants at all. This variability among the Multiunit Schools, both in terms of internal organization and in terms of using central office consultants, contrasts considerably with the control schools that we have already discussed and with the IPI Schools, which we will discuss next.

While there may be some differences among the Individually Prescribed Instruction Schools, the decision-making structures are similar. We think this has to do with the nature of the curriculum in the IPI Schools. All of our questions dealt primarily with classroom related decisions, and because the curricula developed by the LRDC affects many of these decisions (and indeed makes many of these decisions for the teachers) it follows that there should be greater consistency among the IPI Schools. We can only note at this time that in the Individually Prescribed Instruction Schools that we studied

there was no clear, consistent pattern of authority relations that we could discern emerging in any of the schools.

To sum up, there is little variability among control schools. The principal plays a primarily consultive role to the teachers, who are the major decision-makers in the school in terms of classroom related activities. While all Multiunit Schools we studied show a trend toward group decision-making, there is a great deal of variability in authority structures from one school to another. Essentially, in the three schools we studied there were three different types of authority structures. Finally, there is little variability among the IPI Schools, but we think that this is because of the very nature of the Individually Prescribed Instruction system. At any rate, there was no consistent pattern of authority structures in any of the three schools.

The next question we would like to consider is how experimental schools differ from their control schools. Remember that we indicated that control schools had principals as the predominant authority figure in a consultive relationship. Remember also that this was consistent across all control schools. Unitized schools show a significant movement from consultive types of authority relations to a more participative type of relationship. What we mean here is that teachers participate in making decisions in the units rather than making individual decisions with the advice of the principal. The participative type of authority relations refers, we think, primarily to a coordinative effort on the part of the teachers dealing with the same age level of children in an attempt to develop a more effective division of labor among these teachers. We would like to point out that the teachers do not gain power or authority from the central office staff or other people higher in the school organization. Instead, they seem to be pooling their decision-making ability at the classroom level in order to coordinate the activities of students and teachers. In future reports, we will present additional evi-

dence to advance this argument.

The IPI Schools, on the other hand, also show a trend away from the consultive type of authority relations found in their control schools. The movement is toward a more prescriptive type of authority relationship. However, it must be noted again that these prescriptions come not from the central office or the school district, but from the coordinators of the Individually Prescribed Instruction program. It is important to note that this prescriptive type of relationship between the teachers and the IPI coordinators is not a totally subordinate-superordinate relationship. That is, the teachers make decisions, but they are limited in which decisions they can make concerning instruction in the classroom. In other words, the IPI teachers have limited autonomy.

We can briefly contrast the three types of schools that we have discussed. In the control schools, the teachers have more autonomy, but have access to consultants to help them with certain problems. In the Multiunit Schools, the teachers exercise less individual autonomy, but participate in making decisions at the unit level. In the Individually Prescribed Instruction Schools, the teachers relinquish some of their autonomy in order to spend more time with individual students.

In this paper we have limited ourselves to a description of the authority structures in some of the schools studied by the Attributes Projects. We have not attempted to formulate any theoretical approach to this question as yet. In the near future, we intend to complete the analysis of the entire sample of 54 schools. At that time, we shall attempt to make more complete reports on the authority structures of schools.